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THE NARCISSISM OF BARON DOMINIQUE-JEAN LARREY

by

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PREFACE

For this paper I thought it would be interesting to investigate the personality of one of history's greatest battlefield surgeons, Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey who served as Napoleon's Surgeon-in-Chief throughout the rise and fall of Napoleon's Empire. While researching for an in-class presentation about the devastating toll diseases such as typhus and dysentery had on Napoleon's Grand Armée, a theme kept presenting itself when reading about the accounts of Dr. Larrey. The writings of biographers, historians, his peers, and even Dr. Larrey himself reveal he was extremely vain and often times projected his vanity with malice. This research paper captures a small portion of the behaviors of Dr. Larrey and marries them up with research studies on narcissism throughout the past fourteen years to show Dr. Larrey was indeed a narcissist and his narcissistic tendencies precluded him from being an even more influential surgeon.

Throughout the course I communicated with Dr. Kenneth Johnson; professor of the Napoleonic Warfare elective for spring 2015 who reviewed my initial outline and bibliography. From this review we refined the scope of the paper to answer the question if Dr. Larrey was a narcissist and if so, could it have hindered him in achieving further success. Later in the course, Dr. Johnson approved my final outline and updated bibliography. Aside from utilizing the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service from the Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center (MSFRIC) to obtain three books, I received no other assistance.

ABSTRACT

The legacy of Napoleon Bonaparte's Surgeon-in-Chief, Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey is cast. Renowned as a pioneer in the area of battlefield medicine, many of his techniques, methods, and evolutions of his creations such as the "flying ambulance" are utilized still today. There is no question to the historical greatness of Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, however, did he truly achieve his highest potential as a surgeon and doctor or did narcissistic tendencies get in the way? Current research on narcissism will combine with historical accounts of Dr. Larrey to indicate the outward behaviors exhibited by Dr. Larrey meet the definition and essential elements of narcissism. Furthermore, additional studies will show the wartime environment he served in provided the necessary factors to cultivate his narcissistic traits and in turn, distort his decision-making process; subverting punishment to pursue the reward that comes from obtaining a narcissists quest for a positive outcome. The reward being to achieve greatness, power, and self-affirmation.

Introduction

Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey served under Napoleon as *Chirurgien-en-Chef* (surgeon-in-chief) of the Grand Armée and will forever hold a place in history as one of the most influential and profound surgeons to have ever existed. His contributions to the science of medicine and surgery are timeless and still visible today; he created the practice of triage where the most seriously injured are given priority; the modern day ambulance is a direct descendant from Dr. Larrey's "flying ambulance" that quickly transported the wounded from the front lines to hospitals and Dr. Larrey is commonly considered the 'spiritual father' of the Red Cross.¹ The accomplishments of Dr. Larrey were born from one thing; his unselfish dedication to care for the wounded. This core value of Dr. Larrey is a consistently visible theme throughout historical writings on him and is evidenced by how the soldiers of the Grand Armée regarded Dr. Larrey. The man was deeply loved by the common soldier; an admiration and respect earned by his selfless dedication to treating the wounded on the field of battle. A specific instance of his bravery is evident during the campaign in Egypt and Syria. During the battle, General Berthier's aide-de-camp was shot through the neck rupturing his carotid artery. As Dr. Larrey applied a dressing to the wound, a grapeshot shell exploded overhead narrowly missing the doctor. Dr. Larrey, focused on the task at hand continued applying the dressing to the soldier without so much as acknowledging how close he had come to death.² Several years later in 1812 as the defeated Grand Armée was retreating from Russia back to France, the battle-fatigued, tired, and ragged army upon seeing Dr. Larrey struggling to cross the Berezina River bridge began shouting "Save him who saved us!"³ The soldiers still vulnerable to attacks from the Russians rallied together and safely carried Dr. Larrey and his supplies above their heads to the other side. Dr. Larrey was truly a skilled surgeon who saved thousands of lives throughout his career.

Many, familiar with the doctor and his career would likely attribute the success and accomplishments of Dr. Larrey to his surgical skill. However, was it really his skill as a surgeon or did his personality type largely contribute to his success? What if the very personality that led to his success in the Napoleonic Era in some way inhibited him in achieving so much more? Perhaps the ability to abate the spread of typhus or dysentery; diseases that killed upwards of 3,000 soldiers a day in 1812.⁴ Although Dr. Larrey was loved and respected throughout the army, many writings allude to him being quick to judge, aggressive towards critics, and a staunch self-promoter. These accounts provide hints of a personality disorder that existed within Dr. Larrey, a narcissistic personality disorder that gave him strength in tough, challenging, and oppressive situations; and a narcissistic disorder that limited his effectiveness as a member of Napoleons inner circle and primarily, his true potential as a battlefield surgeon. Current research on narcissism will combine with details of his upbringing and specific historical accounts of Dr. Larrey to indicate the outward behavior exhibited by Dr. Larrey meet the definition of, and include the essential elements of narcissism. Additionally, studies will show the wartime environment he served in provided all the necessary factors to cultivate his narcissistic traits and in turn, distorted his decision-making process subverting punishment to pursue reward, and at all cost, attain a positive outcome.

The son of a master shoemaker, Dominique-Jean Larrey was born in 1766 (three years before Napoleon) and began his medical career at age 13 in Toulouse learning under his uncle, Alexis Larrey who was surgeon-in-chief at a local hospital.⁵ Success came quickly for young Larrey; he would be first in his class for two straight years; at 20 he would impressively defend a thesis on bone decay to the University of Toulouse; impressing the University so much they awarded him a medal bearing the arms of the city.⁶ Afterwards, Larrey would serve for a brief

time as a naval surgeon and early in his service, would taste greatness as he visited the birthplace of Ambroise Paré, a renowned 16th Century battlefield surgeon whose mere presence on the field elevated soldier morale so much it was told, “now if we are wounded, we cannot die; Paré is among us.”⁷ Larrey, taken by such reverence, commented upon entering the house “I was overcome by a strange emotion, almost of worship...that at any moment I might see the great man himself.”⁸ This brush with medical greatness would ignite a passion in him to attain the same reverence as Paré. This early endeavor towards a career at the expense of a traditional childhood and upbringing would serve as the genesis of his narcissism and a lifelong drive to satisfy the needs of the self.⁹ By his early thirties Larrey had successfully served in the Navy, served as the doctor to the army in the Rhine, and named a professor of surgery at Val-de-Grace medical school. By 1805 Dr. Larrey, now in his late thirties would ascend to Surgeon-in-Chief to the French Army.¹⁰ The year before as Napoleon crowned himself Emperor, Larrey would be one of the first recipients of the newly created Legion d’Honneur medal in recognition for his outstanding service in the medical profession. Five years later on the battlefield of Wagram, Napoleon would appoint him the title of Baron.¹¹ By this time Larrey had achieved great success in developing the *Ambulance Volante* better known as the “flying ambulance.” He had also defied noble thinking and medical doctrine of the time and instituted the practice of medical triage; prioritizing treatment based on the severity of the injury, not rank, class, or nationality.¹² The early accomplishments and successes show Dr. Larrey was truly a skilled surgeon, confident in his abilities, and not afraid to question long-standing medical assumptions in the pursuit of medical greatness. A pursuit that would be driven by his outward narcissistic behavior. The current medical definition of narcissism and a study identifying the elements of narcissism will

show parallels exist in the life of Dr. Larrey, and confirm he was indeed a narcissist who utilized his special talents as a surgeon to achieve greatness, power, and self-affirmation.

The Elements of Narcissism

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is the standard classification manual mental health professionals use to diagnose mental disorders.¹³ Currently in its fifth edition, narcissism is classified as a personality disorder and is defined as a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, self-focus, and self-importance.¹⁴ In 2001, a study concluded that narcissists are continuously engaged in self-affirmation efforts and in their quest to do so, often find inventive ways of reinforcing the self. For Dr. Larrey, self-affirmation efforts were a constant in his life. In April 1807, Napoleon commissioned a painting depicting the victory at Eylau and wanted to include a surgeon in it. In an effort to achieve self-affirmation, Larrey wrote to the likely artist, a Swiss named Karl Girardet trying to persuade him that he, not his peer Dr. Pierre-Francois Percy should be the surgeon reflected in the painting. The wording of the letter clearly reflects a narcissistic tone.

My request is very well founded as I was the only senior doctor who directed, without intervention, the dressing of all the wounded. It was me who did all the major operations.¹⁵

Artist Antoine-Jean Gros would end up the painter and chose to portray Dr. Percy as the surgeon instead of Dr. Larrey. Not to give up in his endeavor, an opportunity to be included in another painting would soon present itself during the battle of Wagram (the same battle he would be named Baron). In the battle, Marshal Lannes, one of Napoleon's top generals would become wounded in the leg requiring Dr. Larrey to amputate it. Several days later Lannes would die and shortly after his death Napoleon would arrive to say goodbye to his beloved general. During the affair, Dr. Larrey seized the opportunity to suggest to artist and Louvre Director Dominique

Denon who happened to be present, how the event would make a great painting. Capitalizing on the opportunity to promote himself, Dr. Larrey would suggest he be included in it.¹⁶ A few days later Dr. Larrey would write to his wife stating, “I hope he will like the idea...I could figure honorably in the picture.”¹⁷ Achieving success in this endeavor, Dr. Larrey would be immortalized in the painting alongside Marshal Lannes and Napoleon.

To further iterate his elevated view of self and engage in narcissistic means to cement his identity, Dr. Larrey in his unpublished memoirs drew a correlation between his external beauty and his skill as a surgeon.¹⁸

Every time I cut my hair, I experienced many slight indispositions and my mental and physical functions did not return fully to normal until it again reached its usual length.¹⁹

Furthermore, the study interestingly states narcissists live on an interpersonal stage and rely upon exhibitionistic behavior to satisfy their demands for attention and admiration and in doing so, respond to threats to their self-esteem with feelings of rage, defiance, shame, and humiliation.²⁰ Grand Armée pharmacist Pierre-Irénée Jacob described Larrey as, “boastful on his own as three young men put together” and “speaks loudly and with a singular assurance of things of which he is entirely ignorant.”²¹ It is clear Jacob did not care for the company of Dr. Larrey and went on to state the writings of Dr. Larrey “inspire little confidence; his boasting removes all credibility from them.”²² This less than ideal perception of Larrey went beyond just one pharmacist's view of him. A medical student also described Larrey as “full of pretension” further adding that Larrey's vanity led him to elaborate the truth.²³ This behavior was not limited to subordinates either. In 1813, Dr. Larrey tirelessly worked the release of a peer, Dr. Desgenettes, who had been captured by the Russians. Upon Dr. Desgenettes return, Dr. Desgenettes paid no appreciation to what Dr. Larrey had done and when seeking compensation from Napoleon,

purposely left Dr. Larrey out of the claim. An angry Larrey would write to his wife, “Without me, he would be no more than a memory in people’s minds.”²⁴ This incident essentially ended the relationship between the two doctors. These interactions begin to form an understanding of how Dr. Larrey’s narcissistic traits will undermine his endeavors. Stephan Talty, author of the book, *The Illustrious Dead* illustrating how typhus ravaged the 1812 Grand Armée described Dr. Larrey as, “tetchy about his reputation and prone to exaggerate his own accomplishments.”²⁵ This outward behavior corresponds to the studies finding that narcissists display a sense of entitlement along with an expectation of special treatment. It concludes that narcissists are unwilling to reciprocate the favors of others and are unempathetic and interpersonally exploitative.²⁶ Although Dr. Larrey may indeed portray an outward sense of entitlement, to the contrary, the accounts of Dr. Larrey on the battlefield clearly indicate he was anything but unempathetic. In 1799, as Napoleon was abandoning his army in Egypt to return to France, Larrey turned down an order from Napoleon to accompany him stating “it is more important that I stay with my wounded.”²⁷ The memoirs of Larrey also leave no doubt to the respect and admiration Larrey had towards the soldiers of the Grand Armée.

I confess I have never had any desire other than that of helping the wounded, no intention other than that of doing right...I am convinced that one must often sacrifice oneself, perhaps entirely, to others...²⁸

Even with a deep dedication to treating the wounded, Larrey’s narcissistic traits often conflicted with this dedication. One of the most famous innovations Larrey brought to the medical field was the creation of the flying ambulance. These horse drawn wagons were a self-contained medical clinic complete with a doctor and a host of support personnel and supplies which reduced the time between injury and treatment from hours to about 15 minutes.²⁹ Flying ambulances were so effective in collecting and carrying the wounded from the frontlines to

hospitals, other armies copied the concept.³⁰ However, like many ideas and innovations which are born from the improvement of existing artifacts, the same case could be linked to the invention of the flying ambulance. Pierre-Francois Percy, also created a battlefield ambulance known as the *wurst* which unlike flying ambulance that evacuated the wounded from the battlefield to hospitals, the *wurst* served as a mobile hospital for doctors to provide treatment to the wounded directly on the field of battle. Even with these tactical differences, it did not stop Dr. Larrey from accusing Percy of ‘borrowing’ his idea which Dr. Percy eloquently captures in his memoirs stating “he claims that I want to appropriate his discovery and to not forget that it was he who created the flying ambulances...the poor fellow goes mad.”³¹ In an effort to foster their grandiose self-view, narcissists similar to what Dr. Larrey did will attempt to suppress any threat to their ego and in doing so, claim superiority over others.³² In the end, the increased flexibility and efficient use of the flying ambulances prevailed over the *wurst* leading Napoleon to support the implementation of an ambulance corps for use throughout the French territories to which Percy described Larrey as being “mad with pride.”³³

The memoirs of Dr. Percy also provide an insight into how narcissistic traits of Dr. Larrey affected him on campaigns. In 1809, while in Spain, Dr. Larrey had just arrived to a hospital and with surgical equipment often in short supply, the surgeon in charge asked to use Dr. Larrey’s instruments to perform an amputation. Dr. Larrey agreed, however he wanted someone from his team to perform the amputation. The surgeon refused on the belief that having someone else perform the procedure would undermine his reputation. According to Dr. Percy, Dr. Larrey was “furious” and left the hospital taking his instruments with him. His “wounded pride” as Dr. Percy said resulted in the patient suffering until the next day when the surgeon was able to conduct the amputation using borrowed instruments.³⁴ That same day, Dr. Larrey having

felt remorse for his actions, sent members of his staff to help in the procedure. Percy mentions in his memoir regarding the incident that Larrey would be more effective if he was not “addicted of wanting to be master everywhere.”³⁵ This incident reflects not only the need for self-affirmation but also the fact narcissists are characteristically insensitive to the concerns of others and as a result, often take an adversarial view to placate their self-affirmation. This irony according to the study is that conflict like this often leads to a “narcissistic paradox” in that as narcissists yearn and chase self-affirmation, they destroy the very relationships on which they are dependent.³⁶ A theme that persistently occurs throughout the career of Dr. Larrey as he pursues reward at the expense of professional relationships. A consequence described later. These accounts do however add insight to the personality of Dr. Larrey and how his narcissism flourished because of how he viewed himself, how the world viewed him, and how he used his skill as a surgeon to achieve desired outcomes.

The Necessary Factors of Narcissism

The visible behaviors of narcissists are not an action in of itself. There exist certain environments which allow narcissistic behaviors to grow and flourish. Often times the right environment enable narcissists to achieve self-affirmation and true success. For Dr. Larrey, this is overwhelmingly true; he excelled surprisingly well in an era that looked down on medical professionals and achieved immense self-affirmation in an oppressive militaristic construct. Dr. Larrey’s place in history cannot be deduced to simple luck where he drew strength from his narcissism to persevere through it. A large portion of his success can be attributed to the wartime conditions he was a part of. A 2002 Case Western Reserve University study identified three factors contributing to a narcissist’s ability to perform at their peak or what the study refers to as self-enhancement. The three factors to self-enhancement are first, the *quality of the*

performance. This factor means a narcissist achieves greater self-enhancement when the person is performing at the height of their ability. The second factor is *audience characteristics* and suggests narcissists perform better when their skills are on display to a large audience. A factor amazingly similar to self-affirmation. Additionally, a component of this factor suited to Dr. Larrey suggests narcissists when given the chance, prefer to perform their skill for an audience who they value and respect. The final factor is the *diagnosticity of the performance task* which essentially means the more challenging the task, the higher the self-enhancement.³⁷

One does not need to look far to realize the presence of these three factors exist all throughout the life of Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey. The role of the surgeon, especially one as educated and respected as Dr. Larrey provided ample opportunity for him to achieve self-enhancement and self-affirmation. He was a uniquely skilled surgeon (Factor 1) who pioneered the concept of amputations. His memoirs and sketches on the subject are world renowned to this day. In a historical feat of skill, he singularly conducted over 200 amputations in one day during the battle of Borodino in 1812.³⁸ Larrey's was often criticized for being too quick to amputate however taking into his account that "hospitals were dangerous places where fever and gangrene were rife" he understood a soldier stood a better chance for survival from gangrene and disease if the damaged appendage was amputated preventing the soldier from having to go to the hospital.³⁹ Dr. Larrey possessed the skill; now he needs an audience to display it to. An audience that respects the difficult duty of being a battlefield surgeon.

During the Napoleonic Era, Larrey served in 25 campaigns thus providing him the audience he needed to achieve self-enhancement (Factor 2).⁴⁰ Countless accounts exist within the literature of the era describing the deeds and respect Larrey had with the soldiers. Larrey's memoirs also describe in great detail the scores of soldiers he treated in Egypt, Spain, Syria,

Italy, and Russia. Providing aid to those not only wounded in battle, but soldiers suffering from illness and diseases ranging from simple fever to debilitating diseases such as typhus, ophthalmia, and the plague. In a letter to his wife in 1807 after performing continuously for several days during the battle of Eylay, Dr. Larrey would write, “the Emperor and all the army witnessed and approved my conduct.”⁴¹ Moreover, he took the opportunity in the letter to praise the actions of his flying ambulance describing it as “distinguishing itself” by providing the only real service throughout the battle.⁴² Later on, his reputation as a skilled surgeon was so prevalent, upper class Russian prisoners demanded treatment from Dr. Larrey (Factor 3).⁴³ The Napoleonic Era was truly the perfect environment to provide all the critical factors necessary for a narcissist to achieve greatness. However, for Dr. Larrey, the third factor where the more challenging the task, the higher the self-enhancement would repeatedly present challenges.

The duty of a field surgeon is difficult and many historians believed Dr. Larrey often downplayed the severity of conditions on the battlefield. Suggesting the reasons were to either, preserve the already fragile morale of the Grand Armée, to preserve his reputation, or to protect the already weakened reputation of the medical corps.⁴⁴ A measure consistent with the traits of a narcissist who unlike a non-narcissist that will likely change course given new evidence, a narcissist will be inclined to stay the course, further compounding the problem.⁴⁵ This trend is noted in his memoirs where he acknowledges the seriousness of typhus and the damage it is having within the ranks but attributes its cause to the consumption of cold water.⁴⁶ This however provides an example of the tough position battlefield doctors found themselves in and with Dr. Larrey relying heavily on his narcissistic traits, possibly prevented proper understanding of diseases. When faced with the destructive damage illness and diseases are having within the Grand Armée, a narcissist like Larrey seeking self-affirmation is going to seek the desired outcome

and fall back to treatment techniques and beliefs that have proved successful in the past even without concern of their applicability to the current situation. Again, Dr. Larrey will be caught in the “narcissistic paradox” knowing the source of his self-affirmation rests in the soldiers falling victim to these maladies. Attributing the spread to benign objects such as, ice water, liquor, or weather in his attempt to preserve his self. The plague, similar to typhus was a debilitating disease that thrived in dirty conditions and Dr. Larrey in his memoirs often mentioned the need for clean quarters, clothes, and supplies however, he lacked the ability to look past his narcissistic traits to draw correlations between the conditions and the afflicted. This fatal flaw of narcissism further delayed for many years, the discovery and effective treatment of disease. Ironical still, during the battle of Austerlitz seven years before the campaign in Russia, he established clean, lit, and well ventilated typhus treatment facilities away from the front lines greatly reducing its spread. Furthermore, prevention for scurvy was discovered by Royal Navy Surgeon James Lind in 1747, and in 1793 when Larrey was just 27, the British recommended new recruits be quarantined, bathed, and issued new clothes in an effort to prevent the spread of typhus.⁴⁷ Again, all measure that reduced the spread of disease. The significance of these events escaped those who were in a position to do something and although the blame does not rest solely on the shoulders of Dr. Larrey, he arguably possessed the intellect and skills to make the connection. It is unfortunate his narcissism likely limited his already exceptional abilities. An argument to the contrary might be successes like these were not shared throughout the region due to country alliances and geographical borders. The fact is the medical community of the times often shared information and practices without regard to alliances or borders and as the Surgeon-in-Chief, Dr. Larrey often communicated his findings to not only the French medical corps but also to his international colleagues. In the early 1820s, the British began publishing a collection

of medical writings called *The Medico-Chirurgical Review and Journal of Medical Science* in which the British editor, Dr. James Johnson described Dr. Larrey's reputation within, and dedication to the field of medicine.

To be useful to his fellow creatures is the avowed motive of Baron Larrey, for the publication of the present volume, which contains much valuable practical information...to acquire fame cannot be his object. He already stands at the summit of professional reputation. He has in fact reaped the reward which will rarely be withheld from him who possesses talent...⁴⁸

This lavish praise underscores the influence he had throughout medicine and suggests Dr. Larrey possessed the skill, knowledge, and community support necessary to similarly accomplish what James Lind did with scurvy. Even though Lind did not identify the true source of scurvy, he was able to prevent its impact. It is certain Dr. Larrey possessed, and as history would show, exhibited the capability to identify sound methods towards preventing and treating the debilitating wartime diseases of typhus and dysentery. Diseases that killed nearly 300,000 soldiers of the Grand Armée in 1812 and would continue wreaking havoc across battlefields for another century.⁴⁹ This fact cannot be denied yet taken collectively, there does indicate a thread of continuity between the findings of personality studies of today and the accounts of Dr. Larrey. In addition to outward behaviors displayed by a narcissist and the factors needed to foster narcissistic behavior, the next step is to analyze the decision-making process of narcissists, specifically with regard to reward and punishment, and their desire to achieve a positive outcome.

The Decision-Making Flaws of Narcissism

In conjunction with the outward behavior of narcissists and the environment that facilitates this outward behavior, a look into the decision-making process is required to fully understand how narcissists process these external cues and chooses a course of action resulting in

narcissistic behavior. Specifically, the decision-making process that negatively affects relationships vital to a narcissists quest for self-affirmation. A group of studies conducted in 2008 by the University of South Alabama concluded that in the pursuit to achieve a desired outcome that promotes the self, overt narcissists; narcissists that are bold, brash, and confident possess a high approach (reward) motivation and low avoidance (punishment) motivation.⁵⁰ The career of Dr. Larrey is rich with accounts where he sacrificed relationships to achieve reward and where his overconfidence will lead to potential errors all in attempt to achieve a desired outcome. To begin with, during his exile on St. Helena, Napoleon described Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey as,

the most honest man, and the best friend to the soldier, that I ever knew....He tormented the generals and disturbed them out of their beds at night whenever he wanted accommodations or assistance for the sick and wounded. They were all afraid of him, as they knew he would instantly come and make a complaint to me. He paid court to none of them, and was the implacable enemy of the army contractors!⁵¹

This passage provides a lot of insight into what Napoleon thought of Larrey. It suggests Larrey had a positive relationship with Napoleon but it also indicates the strained relationship Dr. Larrey had with Napoleon's Generals and Quartermasters. Dr. Larrey and largely, the medical corps was in a tough position as the invasion to Russia in 1812 drew closer. The medical corps was never militarized during the Napoleonic Era and support for it fell under the Administration which throughout its history seemed bent on breaking the mental and material existence of the military surgeons.⁵² The Administration often diverted funds for medical supplies to other areas, continually questioned expenses and logistical requests, and even stripped surgeons of their distinctive uniform accouterments in attempt to further marginalize them further from the army.⁵³ The Administration went so far as to intercept letters from field doctors to Dr. Larrey keeping him unaware of and unable to report to Napoleon the less than ideal medical conditions

in the field.⁵⁴ So frustrated was Larrey to the lack of support that in a letter to his wife in 1806 he wrote, "How I hate this existence. How unhappy I am. Already smothered by arbitrary authority, paralyzed by their whims...I am involved in enormous expenses which are not reimbursed."⁵⁵ Even when facing resistance, Dr. Larrey was considered a man of integrity and dedication, who when he thought the interest of injured soldiers was at stake, did not hesitate to stand up to quartermasters, the generals and even to Napoleon himself.

During the campaign in Russia, Larrey complained to a Quartermaster, as he often did about how few dressings were available, the Quartermaster then accused Larrey of exhausting the supply faster than they could be replenished. Later as Napoleon was performing an inspection of the medical facilities, Napoleon ignored Larrey as he attempted to relay what had occurred. According to Foster, a narcissist when insulted is likely to respond aggressively which is exactly what Larrey did. Having felt slighted by Napoleon, Larrey attempted to 'get even' by writing a letter criticizing French military medicine under the empire. Later, Napoleon admitted his error and told Larrey, "You should never have doubted what you must surely know, that I regard you as one of the best servants of the State and as my friend."⁵⁶ This act reflects Larrey's low avoidance motivation given the punishment this type of action could have resulted in. Luckily, Napoleons attention was primarily divided amongst many other topics and the welfare of the medical corps let alone the actions of his chief surgeon was indeed not one of them. Dr. Larrey assumed significant risk when he wrote to Napoleon's chief-of-staff calling attention to the fact many of the generals were commandeering the best doctors from the field and assigning them as their personal physician. All while hospitals severely lacked the proper staff to support the growing number of sick and wounded. This initiative caught the ire of General Thiébault who despite pressure from Larrey and orders from Berthier, refused to give up his personal

surgeon in place of an orderly.⁵⁷ The sensitive relationship between Thiébault and Larrey would be on display when after the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, Larrey would treat Thiébault for a gunshot wounds to his chest and shoulder area. In his memoirs Thiébault described Larrey as, “better at cutting off limbs than looking after a sick man” because he was upset Larrey had passed a sound (a probing instrument) between the injuries of the chest and shoulder; a common practice at the time. Larrey, not being one to withhold a response, persisted that Thiébault inflated the extent of his injuries simply to defy Larrey and Berthier’s demands to give up his personal surgeon.⁵⁸ However, there is a relationship between aspects of reward and punishment as it related to desired and undesired outcomes; a relationship narcissists such as Larrey will struggle with.

The study concluded that narcissists are strongly motivated toward desirable outcomes and less motivated by avoiding undesirable outcomes. This finding coincides with the relationship between reward and punishment in that narcissists possess little concern for punishment and negative outcomes. Their desire for reward and in this instance, the need to achieve a desirable outcome far exceed any consequence that could occur in that endeavor. In 1813 after Napoleon’s campaign in Germany, Dr. Larrey was taking part in an inquiry to determine whether soldiers of the Grand Armée had intentionally shot themselves in the hand to avoid battle. As Napoleon was listening to the arguments of his generals and subordinate doctors who believed soldiers were indeed self-mutilating, Larrey much to the surprise of Napoleon offered a dissenting opinion. Intrigued by the opposing view, Napoleon formed a jury headed by Dr. Larrey to investigate the 48 soldiers accused. After four days, the jury concluded the injuries were a product of inexperience and not willful intent.⁵⁹ This decision, quickly approved by Napoleon not only saved the 48 from certain death, but possibly hundreds of soldiers bearing

similar injuries. The reward also included the adoration of Napoleon who that night, would give Dr. Larrey a diamond studded portrait of the Emperor and a pension of 3,000 francs.⁶⁰ Clearly excited about the result, Dr. Larrey would write in his usual narcissistic tone.

This day was one of the happiest of my life since I was able to save the lives of 48 persons and to preserve the honour and pride of French soldiers.⁶¹

It is obvious the enormous pressure Dr. Larrey faced being in charge of the investigation responsible for the lives of soldiers he had served with in battle. Having a deeper understanding of the narcissistic personality from the preceding, the outcome is not all that surprising. What better way to achieve self-affirmation than to save the lives of your fellow countrymen and be showered with praise from your Emperor. This situation is the narcissist's perfect scenario. Saving the lives is the ultimate reward, the essence of greatness, power, and self-affirmation. At that time, Larrey was already famous in France from his battlefield prowess during the Russian campaign. He was adored and achieved a profound respect among soldiers as evidenced with his crossing of the Berezina River. Moreover, in 1808 while in Spain, Larrey wrote, "the soldiers of the Guard take good care of me. They have an affection for me, and never let me want for anything!"⁶² This adoration along with his deep passion to treating the wounded was surely at conflict with the situation he now found himself in; the arbiter of 48 lives. However, even as many generals and doctors bore witness to many of the soldiers infractions and the fact that every injury sustained from clumsy marksmanship were in the hand versus other likely areas such as the head, shoulders, back, and legs, Dr. Larrey strongly motivated towards a desirable outcome that satisfies his self-affirmation and clearly undeterred by the inevitable scorn and punishment from his peers and the Generals elected to affirm the soldiers account.⁶³

Conclusion

Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey was a skilled and deeply influential battlefield surgeon. His legacy to the field of medicine is timeless and many people; from the soldiers of the Grand Armée to people today owe their lives to the methods developed by Dr. Larrey. Along with the positive achievements and successes of Dr. Larrey there too exists the negative. The fact that he possessed the elements of narcissism where he seized opportunities to elevate his importance, procure power, and grasp grandeur. These elements combined impressively well with the factors of skill and the continual presence of a wartime audience to display his unique skill to. These narcissistic traits biased his decision-making process to pursue the most desired outcome possible that satisfied his need for greatness, power, and self-affirmation. Given the incredibly difficult position of being a battlefield surgeon in the Napoleonic Era, Dr. Larrey would rely greatly on his narcissism for survival and to achieve his goal; to care for the wounded. However successful he was in advancing care to the injured, there exists a wealth of information to support the theory that his narcissistic traits likely hindered his ability to achieve so much more.

Notes

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4. Stephan Talty, *The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army* (New York: Crown, 2009), 258.
5. Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey, *Memoir of Baron Larrey, Surgeon-in-Chief of the Grande Armée*, (French. Harvard College Library, 1932), 4.
6. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 8.
7. Ibid., 10.
8. Ibid., 10.
9. Carolyn C. Morf and Frederick Rhodewalt, "Unraveling the Paradoxes of Narcissism: A Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model," *Psychological Inquiry* 12, no. 4 (October 2001): 179. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost.
10. Trauma.org, "History," <http://www.trauma.org/archive/history/larrey.html>.
11. Ibid.
12. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 6.
13. American Psychiatric Association, "DSM," <http://www.psychiatry.org/practice/dsm>.
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15. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 61.
16. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 139-140.
17. Blaine Taylor, "Napoleon's Faithful Field Surgeon," *Military History* 14, no. 2 (June 1997): 46. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost.
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21. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 58.
22. Ibid., 58.
23. Ibid., 58.

24. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 188.
25. Stephan Talty, *The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army* (New York: Crown, 2009), 207.
26. Carolyn C. Morf and Frederick Rhodewalt, "Unraveling the Paradoxes of Narcissism: A Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model," *Psychological Inquiry* 12, no. 4 (October 2001): 177. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost.
27. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 56.
28. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 203-204.
29. Stephan Talty, *The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army* (New York: Crown, 2009), 42.
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31. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 60; Baron Pierre-Francois Percy, *Journal des Campagnes du Baron Percy, Chirurgien en Chef de la Grande Armée 1754-1825* (University of Ottawa, 1904), 438.
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35. Ibid., 455.
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37. Harry M. Wallace and Roy F. Baumeister, "The Performance of Narcissists Rises and Falls with Perceived Opportunity for Glory," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 82, no. 5 (May 2002): 820. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost.
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39. Blaine Taylor, "Napoleon's Faithful Field Surgeon," *Military History* 14, no. 2 (June 1997): 46. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost.
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41. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 115.
42. Ibid., 115.
43. Ibid., 162.
44. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 59.

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47. Ibid., 54-55.
48. Dr. James Johnson, "The Medico-Chirurgical Review and Journal of Medical Science," Associated Physicians and Surgeons no 3 (1822-3): 34.
49. Stephan Talty, *The Illustrious Dead: The Terrifying Story of How Typhus Killed Napoleon's Greatest Army* (New York: Crown, 2009), 258.
50. Joshua D. Foster and Riley F. Trimm IV, "On Being Eager and Uninhibited: Narcissism and Approach–Avoidance Motivation." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, no. 7 (July 2008): 1006. SAGE Journals, <http://psp.sagepub.com/>.
51. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 228.
52. Ibid., 101.
53. Ibid., 101.
54. Ibid., 163.
55. Ibid., 107.
56. Blaine Taylor, "Napoleon's Faithful Field Surgeon," *Military History* 14, no. 2 (June 1997): 46. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost.
57. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 100.
58. Martin R. Howard, *Napoleon's Doctors: The Medical Services of the Grand Armée* (Great Britain: Spellmount, 2006), 105.
59. Robert G. Richardson, *Larrey: Surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard* (London: John Murray, 1974), 196.
60. Ibid., 197.
61. Ibid., 197.
62. Blaine Taylor, "Napoleon's Faithful Field Surgeon," *Military History* 14, no. 2 (June 1997): 46. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost.
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